

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Fontaine Trailer Company

Alabama Technology Network

Fontaine Trailer Sees Benefits of Workplace Organization

Client Profile:

Fontaine Trailer Company manufactures flat bed trailers in Haleyville, Alabama. Founded in 1940 in Birmingham, the company expanded in 1964 when the Haleyville plant was purchased. There are currently 331 employees at the Haleyville facility. Fontaine Trailer Company is a member of Fontaine International Incorporated, which is a member of the Marmon Group. The Marmon Group, an international association of autonomous manufacturing and service companies, is located in Chicago, Illinois.

Situation:

Fontaine had previously completed a kaizen event with the Alabama Technology Network (ATN), a NIST MEP network affiliate, to organize its flooring, painting and finishing areas. They wanted to apply 5 S to the final weld and air and lights departments. 5 S is a systematic approach to sort, set-in-order, shine, standardize and sustain in order to achieve workplace organization and increased productivity. Workers in the final weld and air and lights departments suffered from a lack of space, and in the crowded environment, they could not find the tools they needed. Various hoses, parts, tools and raw material were cluttered on work surfaces and on the floor. Once again, Fontaine turned to ATN's University of Alabama center for assistance.

Solution:

The ATN facilitators conducted a focused, five-day kaizen event in the unorganized area. The areas were initially audited at the first of the week using the ATN standardized 5 S audit procedure. The team ranked a variety of items based on the number of problems they had, ranging from unneeded equipment present to the cleanliness of work surfaces. An area with 5 or more problems would get a score of 0, and an area with no problems would get a score of 4. The final weld department received an initial score of 23, and the air and lights department received an initial score of 9. When the 5 S process was complete, the team again audited the areas. Final weld received a score of 59, a 156 percent increase; and air and lights received a final score of 58, a five-fold increase. The team also developed daily 5 S checklists for each area. The checklists were developed to help sustain the results from the week and also to develop a cleaning standard for each employee in the two areas to follow. The Fontaine team plans on applying their solutions with the plant's other two bays for the respective areas.

Results:

- * Achieved workplace organization.
- * Increased productivity.
- * Developed 5 S checklists for each area.

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Testimonial:

"I'm extremely proud of the progress the team made in one week's time. It will take that kind of teamwork from all of our employees to help Fontaine achieve its goals of becoming a lean facility."

Jim Simister, Vice President of Operations